

## Montauk Playhouse Swimming Pool Construction To Start in April; Foundation Raised \$8.25 Million in Donations



by Michael Wright  
Feb. 21, 2024

The Montauk Playhouse Community Center Foundation donated more than \$8.2 million in privately raised money to East Hampton Town last week to fund the bulk of the construction of a planned swimming pool and cultural center inside the cavernous empty half of the historic Playhouse building.

With the foundation's donation in hand, the East Hampton Town Board on Thursday, February 15, approved the nearly \$14 million contractor bids for the construction of the pool and other facilities and said the work could begin as soon as this April and be completed by late summer 2025.

The town will contribute \$5.5 million toward the construction — it increased its contribution by \$500,000 last week — and the State Legislature has earmarked \$1.7 million for a grant to support the second-floor cultural center component of the project.

The Playhouse foundation had not previously revealed exactly how much it had raised for the project, to protect the integrity of the blind bidding process, but had told the town last spring that it had enough — accounting for the \$5 million the town had already pledged — to move the project toward the construction phase.

“This is probably one of the largest community projects in Montauk for which funds have been privately raised, an accomplishment that is a testament to our community's philanthropic and civic-minded members,” the foundation's president, Sarah Iudicone, said in celebrating the town's advancing the project. “We will continue to fundraise as construction moves forward to plan for programming and to provide services that fulfill community needs.”

The Town Board voted unanimously to accept bids from four contractors for the work. The total cost of the four bids — general construction, HVAC, plumbing and electrical — is \$13,930,005, including the addition of about \$1.5 million in “alternative” costs for

the construction of the cultural center, which was going to be put off for a later date if the costs had proven out of reach of the foundation's current fund.

But with the funding in place, the entire project will be tackled at once.

“The foundation has raised a staggering \$8.25 million that, I believe, they've already wired to the town,” Supervisor Kathee Burke-Gonzalez said last week. “It's very exciting.”

The consultants who led the planning and bidding for the project recommended that the town add about 5 percent of the total costs to the expected budget for unexpected contingencies in the construction process.

The consultant, Scott DiBerardino of Island Structures Engineering, said that his group had vetted each of the contractors by going over their bids and the costs they projected, reviewing their past projects and references before recommending them to the town.

DiBerardino said that he expects the work will be able to begin by April, but that the exact timing will be decided by the general contractors. The construction itself, he said, is expected to take between 16 and 18 months.

The general contracting bid, for a total of \$9.22 million, will go to Smithtown-based Crossroads Construction. The \$2.5 million HVAC bid will go to Boilermatic Welding Industries of Medford. Maccarone Plumbing of Glen Cove won the plumbing contract with a bid of \$825,500 for both phases, and MRJ Industries, a Hampton Bays electrician, will get a \$988,505 contract for the electrical wiring of the new facilities.

The swimming pool has been the vision for the empty half of the Playhouse building essentially since the town acquired it in 1999. The building, which was initially built in the 1920s as an indoor tennis facility, underwent the first phase of renovations, the creation of recreation and human services spaces, in the building's eastern wing in 2005 and 2006. The Playhouse foundation began its push for a swimming facility in 2014. The town pledged \$3 million toward the project in 2017 and received a \$1 million anonymous donation in 2018. The town increased its funding pledge to \$5 million last year and to \$5.5 million last week.

“Sara Iudicone and all the past chairs [of the foundation], they've done a tremendous amount of work to get us to this point,” Lys said.

“This is a milestone moment for the hamlet of Montauk,” he added. “The members of the foundation should be commended for stepping up, and the community. It's another example of very good public-private partnership with the town.”